

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-7 and 11-14 without prejudice and amend claims 8, 9, 15, 21, 25 and 26 as shown below.

Claim 1 (cancelled).

Claim 2 (cancelled).

Claim 3 (cancelled).

Claim 4 (cancelled).

Claim 5 (cancelled).

Claim 6 (cancelled).

Claim 7 (cancelled).

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method of forming a filter cartridge, comprising the steps of:

- a) supporting a porous filter element at a central portion thereof;
- b) transferring the filter element to an end cap application station;
- c) automatically placing a pair of metal end caps, having an adhesive therein, on opposite ends of said filter element at substantially a first time using said end cap application station;
- d) transferring the filter element to an inductive heating station; and
- e) heating the end caps by inductive heating, thereby partially curing ~~pre-curing~~ said adhesive in said pair of metal end caps to bond said pair of metal end caps to opposing ends of said filter element.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

 f) transferring the filter element, with attached end caps, to a final cure conveyor; and

 g) moving the filter element, on the final cure conveyor, through a final cure oven.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The method of claim 9, wherein said filter element is rotated from a substantially horizontal orientation to a substantially vertical orientation thereof during the step of transferring the filter element with the attached end caps.

Claim 11 (cancelled).

Claim 12 (cancelled).

Claim 13 (cancelled).

Claim 14 (cancelled).

Claim 15 (currently amended): A method of forming a filter cartridge, comprising:

 providing a filter element;

 transferring said filter element to an end cap application station;

 disposing an adhesive on a pair of metal end caps;

automatically placing said pair of metal end caps on opposite ends of said filter element at substantially a first time using said end cap application station;

automatically transferring the filter element to an inductive heating station using a transfer device; and

 heating said pair of end caps by inductive heating to partially cure ~~pre-cure~~ said adhesive, wherein said pair of end caps are bonded to said filter element.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The method as in claim 15, wherein the step of heating is performed by a pair of inductive heating assemblies one for each end cap.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The method as in claim 16, wherein said pair of inductive heating assemblies prevents bonding of said pair of end caps to said pair of inductive heating assemblies.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The method as in claim 16, wherein said pair of inductive heating assemblies are configured to move simultaneously in opposite directions.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The method as in claim 16, wherein said pair of inductive heating assemblies incorporate electromagnetic field generators.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The method as in claim 19, wherein said pair of inductive heating assemblies induce current flow within said pair of end caps during said heating step.

Claim 21 (currently amended): The method as in claim 15, further comprising:
transferring said filter element with the partially cured ~~pre-cured~~ adhesive to a final cure station.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The method as in claim 21, wherein said final cure station is an oven for baking the filter element to permanently fix said end caps on said filter element.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The method as in claim 22, wherein said filter element is substantially cylindrical.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The method as in claim 15, wherein said filter element is substantially cylindrical.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The method as in claim 15, wherein said heating said pair of end caps includes applying a high-frequency electromagnetic field proximate each end cap to induce current flow within each end cap that generates heat within each end cap ~~causes a high-frequency electromagnetic field to surround each end cap, wherein the electromagnetic field induces current flow within each end cap.~~

Claim 26 (currently amended): A method of securing a pair of end caps to a filter element, comprising:

transferring the filter element to an end cap application station;
disposing an adhesive on the pair of end caps;
automatically placing the pair of end caps on opposite ends of the filter element at substantially a first time using said end cap application station; and
heating the pair of end caps to partially cure ~~pre-cure~~ said adhesive, to bond the pair of end caps to the filter element by applying a high-frequency electromagnetic field around each end cap to induce current flow within each end cap that generates heat within each end cap ~~wherein the pair of end caps are bonded to the filter element and wherein said heating causes a high-frequency electromagnetic field to surround each end cap, wherein the electromagnetic field induces current flow within each end cap.~~